

No.

200100204



THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

TO ALL TO WHOM THESE PRESENTS SHALL COME:

Syngenta Seeds, Inc.

Whereas, THERE HAS BEEN PRESENTED TO THE

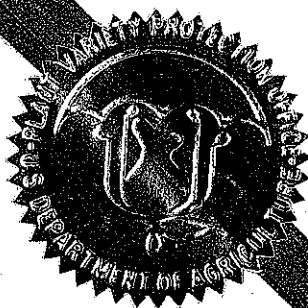
Secretary of Agriculture

AN APPLICATION REQUESTING A CERTIFICATE OF PROTECTION FOR AN ALLEGED DISTINCT VARIETY OF SEXUALLY REPRODUCED, OR TUBER PROPAGATED PLANT, THE NAME AND DESCRIPTION OF WHICH ARE CONTAINED IN THE APPLICATION AND EXHIBITS, A COPY OF WHICH IS HEREUNTO ANNEXED AND MADE A PART HEREOF, AND THE VARIOUS REQUIREMENTS OF LAW IN SUCH CASES MADE AND PROVIDED HAVE BEEN COMPLIED WITH, AND THE TITLE THERETO IS, FROM THE RECORDS OF THE PLANT VARIETY PROTECTION OFFICE, IN THE APPLICANT(S) INDICATED IN THE SAID COPY, AND WHEREAS, UPON DUE EXAMINATION MADE, THE SAID APPLICANT(S) IS (ARE) ADJUDGED TO BE ENTITLED TO A CERTIFICATE OF PLANT VARIETY PROTECTION UNDER THE LAW.

NOW, THEREFORE, THIS CERTIFICATE OF PLANT VARIETY PROTECTION IS TO GRANT UNTO THE SAID APPLICANT(S) AND THE SUCCESSORS, HEIRS OR ASSIGNS OF THE SAID APPLICANT(S) FOR THE TERM OF TWENTY YEARS FROM THE DATE OF THIS GRANT, SUBJECT TO THE PAYMENT OF THE REQUIRED FEES AND PERIODIC REPLENISHMENT OF VIABLE BASIC SEED OF THE VARIETY IN A PUBLIC REPOSITORY AS PROVIDED BY LAW, THE RIGHT TO EXCLUDE OTHERS FROM SELLING THE VARIETY, OR OFFERING IT FOR SALE, OR REPRODUCING IT, OR IMPORTING IT, OR EXPORTING IT, OR CONDITIONING IT FOR PROPAGATION, OR STOCKING IT FOR ANY OF THE ABOVE PURPOSE, OR USING IT IN PRODUCING A HYBRID OR DIFFERENT VARIETY THEREFROM, TO THE EXTENT PROVIDED BY THE PLANT VARIETY PROTECTION ACT. (84 STAT. 1542, AS AMENDED, 7 U.S.C. 2321 ET SEQ.)

SOYBEAN

'S16-Y6'



In Testimony Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the seal of the Plant Variety Protection Office to be affixed at the City of Washington, D.C. this third day of December, in the year two thousand one.

Ant. J. ...

Attest:

Paul M. Johnson

Commissioner
Plant Variety Protection Office
Agricultural Marketing Service

Secretary of Agriculture

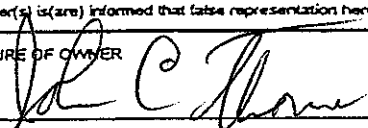
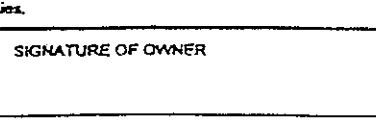
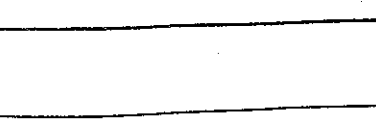

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
AGRICULTURAL MARKETING SERVICE
SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY - PLANT VARIETY PROTECTION OFFICE

The following state merits are made in accordance with the Privacy Act of 1974 (5 U.S.C. 552a) and the Paperwork Reduction Act (PRA) of 1995.

Application is required in order to determine if a plant variety protection certificate is to be issued (7 U.S.C. 2421). Information is held confidential until certificate is issued (7 U.S.C. 2426).

APPLICATION FOR PLANT VARIETY PROTECTION CERTIFICATE

(Instructions and information collection burden statement on reverse)

1. NAME OF OWNER Syngenta Seeds, Inc.		2. TEMPORARY DESIGNATION OR EXPERIMENTAL NAME M001219, X016		3. VARIETY NAME S16-Y6	
4. ADDRESS (Street and No., or R.F.D. No., City, State, and ZIP Code, and Country) P.O. Box 959 Minneapolis MN, 55440		5. TELEPHONE (include area code) 763-593-7333		FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY PVPO NUMBER 200100204	
6. FAX (include area code) 763-593-7801		7. IF THE OWNER NAMED IS NOT A "PERSON", GIVE FORM OF ORGANIZATION (corporation, partnership, association, etc.) Corporation		8. IF INCORPORATED, GIVE STATE OF INCORPORATION Delaware	
9. DATE OF INCORPORATION 1976		10. NAME AND ADDRESS OF OWNER REPRESENTATIVE(S) TO SERVE IN THIS APPLICATION. (First person listed will receive all papers) John C. Thorne Syngenta Seeds, Inc. P.O. Box 949 Washington, IA 52353		FILING AND EXAMINATION FEES: FEE \$ 2705.00 DATE 5/3/2001 CERTIFICATION FEE: FEE \$ 320.50 DATE 9/4/01	
11. TELEPHONE (include area code) 319-653-2181 <i>(6/27/01)</i>		12. FAX (include area code) 319-653-4609		13. E-MAIL Johnc.Thorne@syngenta.com	
14. CROP KIND (Common Name) Soybeans		15. GENUS AND SPECIES NAME OF CROP Glycine max		16. FAMILY NAME (Botanical) Leguminosae	
17. IS THE VARIETY A FIRST GENERATION HYBRID? <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO		18. CHECK APPROPRIATE BOX FOR EACH ATTACHMENT SUBMITTED (Follow instructions on reverse) a. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Exhibit A. Origin and Breeding History of the Variety b. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Exhibit B. Statement of Distinctness c. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Exhibit C. Objective Description of Variety d. <input type="checkbox"/> Exhibit D. Additional Description of the Variety (Optional) e. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Exhibit E. Statement of the Basis of the Owner's Ownership f. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Voucher Sample (2,500 viable untreated seeds or, for tuber propagated varieties, verification that tissue culture will be deposited and maintained in an approved public repository) g. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Filing and Examination Fee (\$2,450), made payable to "Treasurer of the United States" (Mail to the Plant Variety Protection Office)		19. DOES THE OWNER SPECIFY THAT SEED OF THIS VARIETY BE SOLD AS A CLASS OF CERTIFIED SEED? See Section 83(a) of the Plant Variety Protection Act. <input type="checkbox"/> YES (If "yes", answer items 20 and 21 below) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO (If "no", go to item 22)	
20. DOES THE OWNER SPECIFY THAT SEED OF THIS VARIETY BE LIMITED AS TO NUMBER OF GENERATIONS? <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO		21. IF "YES" TO ITEM 20, WHICH CLASSES OF PRODUCTION BEYOND BREEDER SEED? <input type="checkbox"/> FOUNDATION <input type="checkbox"/> REGISTERED <input type="checkbox"/> CERTIFIED		22. HAS THE VARIETY (INCLUDING ANY HARVESTED MATERIAL) OR A HYBRID PRODUCED FROM THIS VARIETY BEEN SOLD, DISPOSED OF, TRANSFERRED, OR USED IN THE U. S. OR OTHER COUNTRIES? <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO 8/13/01 per applicant's permission IF YES, YOU MUST PROVIDE THE DATE OF FIRST SALE, DISPOSITION, TRANSFER, OR USE FOR EACH COUNTRY AND THE CIRCUMSTANCES. (Please use space indicated on reverse.)	
23. IS THE VARIETY OR ANY COMPONENT OF THE VARIETY PROTECTED BY INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHT (PLANT BREEDER'S RIGHT OR PATENT)? <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO 8/13/01 per applicant's permission IF YES, PLEASE GIVE COUNTRY, DATE OF FILING OR ISSUANCE AND ASSIGNED REFERENCE NUMBER. (Please use space indicated on reverse.)		24. The owners declare that a viable sample of basic seed of the variety will be furnished with application and will be replenished upon request in accordance with such regulations as may be applicable, or for a tuber propagated variety a tissue culture will be deposited in a public repository and maintained for the duration of the certificate. The undersigned owner(s) is(are) the owner of this sexually reproduced or tuber propagated plant variety, and believe(s) that the variety is new, distinct, uniform, and stable as required in Section 42, and is entitled to protection under the provisions of Section 42 of the Plant Variety Protection Act. Owner(s) is(are) informed that false representation herein can jeopardize protection and result in penalties.		SIGNATURE OF OWNER  NAME (Please print or type) John C. Thorne CAPACITY OR TITLE Director of Soybean Breeding DATE 4-16-01	
SIGNATURE OF OWNER  NAME (Please print or type) John C. Thorne CAPACITY OR TITLE Director of Soybean Breeding DATE 4-16-01		SIGNATURE OF OWNER  NAME (Please print or type) John C. Thorne CAPACITY OR TITLE Director of Soybean Breeding DATE 4-16-01		SIGNATURE OF OWNER  NAME (Please print or type) John C. Thorne CAPACITY OR TITLE Director of Soybean Breeding DATE 4-16-01	

200100204

EXHIBIT A

Origin and Breeding History of S16-Y6

In the summer of 1993 the Syngenta Seeds, Inc. (formerly Novartis Seeds, Inc. or Northrup King Co.) breeding group at Washington, IA, made the cross, 'A2242' x Experimental 02052-11, from which the variety S16-Y6 is derived. A2242 a commercial cultivar marketed by Asgrow Seed Co. Experimental 02052-11 is a genotype developed by Midwest Oilseeds.

The F1 and F2 generations were grown at the Syngenta Seeds, Inc., Research Center near Kekaha, Kauai, HI, in the winter of 1993-94. The F3 generation was grown at Washington in the summer of 1994; the F4 and F5 in Kekaha in the winter of 1994-95, and the F6 at Washington in the summer of 1995. The F2 through F5 generations were advanced using a modified system of single seed descent. Single F6 plants were harvested in the fall of 1995 and threshed individually. The progeny from these plants were yield tested in a preliminary yield trial in the summer of 1996. One of these, designated M001219, was chosen for advancement. M001219 was tested in extensive replicated trials in the northern United States and southern Ontario from 1997 through 2000 and found to perform well compared to other mid Maturity Group 1 varieties. It was tested in the greenhouse at the Syngenta Seeds, Inc. Research Center at Bay, AR, for resistance to *Phytophthora sojae* and found to have no major genes for resistance. It was also found to have purple flowers, light tawny pubescence, tan pod walls, and seed with yellow seed coats and brown hila (may contain up to 2% other hilum color). In 2000 it was tested under the experimental designation X016, and based on its yield superiority, it was released as S16-Y6.

During the winter of 1997-98, approximately 500 seeds of S16-Y6 were rogued for hilum color and planted in Kekaha. This increase was rogued for flower, pubescence, and pod color, and 150 plants were harvested individually. The seed from these plants were planted as progeny rows at the Syngenta Seeds, Inc. Research Center at Owatonna, MN in the summer of 1998. The increase was rogued carefully at flowering and maturity, and any rows containing off-type plants were removed. The remaining rows were then harvested and bulked to produce Pre-breeder seed. This seed was planted at Washington in the summer of 1999, rogued carefully throughout the growing season, and harvested to produce Breeder Seed.

Foundation seed of S16-Y6 was produced by Syngenta Seeds, Inc. in the summer of 2000 and found to meet Syngenta standards for Foundation Seed.

S16-Y6 is uniform and stable within a purity level of 99% (98% for hilum color). During the four years of testing and three years of seed increase, we have observed no variants. Any off-type plants removed from increase fields were assumed to have arisen from admixture or out-crossing. Varietal purity will be maintained using progeny rows as needed for the life of the variety.

Exhibit B

200800204

Statement of Distinctness for the Variety S16-Y6

Soybean variety S16-Y6 is most like the varieties S13-J6 and CX145. It can be differentiated from S13-J6 on the basis of pubescence and pod wall color. S16-Y6 has light tawny pubescence and tan pod walls; S13-J6 has tawny pubescence and brown pod walls. It can be differentiated from CX145 on the basis of pod color and hilum color. S16-Y6 has tan pod walls and seeds with brown hila; CX145 has brown pod walls and seeds with black hila.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
 AGRICULTURAL MARKETING SERVICE
 LIVESTOCK, MEAT, GRAIN & SEED DIVISION
 PLANT VARIETY PROTECTION OFFICE
 BELTSVILLE, MARYLAND 20705

EXHIBIT C
 (Soybean)

OBJECTIVE DESCRIPTION OF VARIETY
 SOYBEAN (*Glycine max* L.)

NAME OF APPLICANT(S) Syngenta Seeds, Inc.	TEMPORARY DESIGNATION M001219 (X016)	VARIETY NAME S16-Y6
ADDRESS (Street and No., or R.F.D. No., City, State, and Zip Code) P.O. Box 959 Minneapolis, MN 55440		FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY PVPO-NUMBER 20001002040

Choose the appropriate response which characterizes the variety in the features described below. When the number of significant digits in your answer is fewer than the number of boxes provided, place a zero in the first box when number is 9 or less (e.g.,).

1. SEED SHAPE:



1 = Spherical (L/W, L/T, and T/W ratios = < 1.2)
 3 = Elongate (L/T ratio > 1.2; T/W = < 1.2)

2 = Spherical Flattened (L/W ratio > 1.2; L/T ratio = < 1.2)
 4 = Elongate Flattened (L/T ratio > 1.2; T/W > 1.2)

2. SEED COAT COLOR: (Mature Seed)

1 = Yellow 2 = Green 3 = Brown 4 = Black 5 = Other (Specify) _____

3. SEED COAT LUSTER: (Mature Hand Shelled Seed)

1 = Dull ('Corsoy 79'; 'Braxton') 2 = Shiny ('Nebsoy'; 'Gasoy 17')

4. SEED SIZE: (Mature Seed)

Grams per 100 seeds

5. HILUM COLOR: (Mature Seed)

1 = Buff 2 = Yellow 3 = Brown 4 = Gray 5 = Imperfect Black 6 = Black 7 = Other (Specify) _____

May contain up to 2% other hilum color

6. COTYLEDON COLOR: (Mature Seed)

1 = Yellow 2 = Green

7. SEED PROTEIN PEROXIDASE ACTIVITY:

1 = Low 2 = High

8. SEED PROTEIN ELECTROPHORETIC BAND:

1 = Type A (SP1^a) 2 = Type B (SP1^b)

9. HYPOCOTYL COLOR:

1 = Green only ('Evans'; 'Davis') 2 = Green with bronze band below cotyledons ('Woodworth'; 'Tracy')
 3 = Light Purple below cotyledons ('Beeson'; 'Pickett 71')
 4 = Dark Purple extending to unifoliate leaves ('Hodgson'; 'Coker Hampton 266A')

10. LEAFLET SHAPE:

1 = Lanceolate 2 = Oval 3 = Ovate 4 = Other (Specify) _____

11. LEAFLET SIZE:

2

1 = Small ('Amsoy 71'; 'A5312')
3 = Large ('Crawford'; 'Tracy')

2 = Medium ('Corsoy 79'; 'Gasoy 17')

12. LEAF COLOR:

2

1 = Light Green ('Weber'; 'York')
3 = Dark Green ('Gnome'; 'Tracy')

2 = Medium Green ('Corsoy 79'; 'Braxton')

13. FLOWER COLOR:

2

1 = White 2 = Purple 3 = White with purple throat

14. POD COLOR:

1

1 = Tan 2 = Brown 3 = Black

15. PLANT PUBESCENCE COLOR:

1

1 = Gray 2 = Brown (Tawny)
Light Tawny

16. PLANT TYPES:

2

1 = Slender ('Essex'; 'Amsoy 71')
3 = Bushy ('Gnome'; 'Govan')

2 = Intermediate ('Amcor'; 'Braxton')

17. PLANT HABIT:

3

1 = Determinate ('Gnome'; 'Braxton')
3 = Indeterminate ('Nebsoy'; 'Improved Pelican')

2 = Semi-Determinate ('Will')

18. MATURITY GROUP:

4

1 = 000 2 = 00 3 = 0 4 = I 5 = II 6 = III 7 = IV 8 = V
9 = VI 10 = VII 11 = VIII 12 = IX 13 = X

19. DISEASE REACTION: (Enter 0 = Not Tested; 1 = Susceptible; 2 = Resistant)

BACTERIAL DISEASES:

0

Bacterial Pustule (*Xanthomonas phaseoli* var. *sojensis*)

0

Bacterial Blight (*Pseudomonas glycinea*)

0

Wildfire (*Pseudomonas tabaci*)

FUNGAL DISEASES:

0

Brown Spot (*Septoria glycines*)

Frogeye Leaf Spot (*Cercospora sojae*)

0

Race 1

0

Race 2

0

Race 3

0

Race 4

0

Race 5

0

Other (Specify)

0

Target Spot (*Corynespora cassicola*)

0

Downy Mildew (*Peronospora trifoliorum* var. *manshurica*)

0

Powdery Mildew (*Microsphaera diffusa*)

1

Brown Stem Rot (*Cephalosporium gregatum*)

0

Stem Canker (*Diaporthe phaseolorum* var. *caulivora*)

19. DISEASE REACTION: (Enter 0 = Not Tested; 1 = Susceptible; 2 = Resistant) (Continued)

FUNGAL DISEASES: (Continued)

200100204

☒ 1 Pod and Stem Blight (*Diaporthe phaseolorum* var. *sojae*)

☒ 1 Purple Seed Stain (*Cercospora kikuchii*)

☒ 1 Rhizoctonia Root Rot (*Rhizoctonia solani*)

Phytophthora Rot (*Phytophthora megasperma* var. *sojae*)

☒ 1 Race 1 ☐ Race 2 ☒ 1 Race 3 ☒ 1 Race 4 ☐ Race 5 ☐ Race 6 ☒ 1 Race 7

☐ Race 8 ☐ Race 9 ☐ Other (Specify) _____

VIRAL DISEASES:

☐ 0 Bud Blight (Tobacco Ringspot Virus)

☐ 0 Yellow Mosaic (Bean Yellow Mosaic Virus)

☐ 0 Cowpea Mosaic (Cowpea Chlorotic Virus)

☐ 0 Pod Mottle (Bean Pod Mottle Virus)

☐ 0 Seed Mottle (Soybean Mosaic Virus)

NEMATODE DISEASES:

Soybean Cyst Nematode (*Heterodera glycines*)

☐ Race 1 ☐ Race 2 ☒ 1 Race 3 ☐ Race 4 ☐ Other (Specify) _____

☐ Lance Nematode (*Hoplolaimus Colombus*)

☐ 0 Southern Root Knot Nematode (*Meloidogyne incognita*)

☐ 0 Northern Root Knot Nematode (*Meloidogyne Hapla*)

☐ 0 Peanut Root Knot Nematode (*Meloidogyne arenaria*)

☐ 0 Reniform Nematode (*Rotylenchulus reniformis*)

☐ OTHER DISEASE NOT ON FORM (Specify): _____

20. PHYSIOLOGICAL RESPONSES: (Enter 0 = Not Tested; 1 = Susceptible; 2 = Resistant)

☒ 1 Iron Chlorosis on Calcareous Soil

☐ Other (Specify) _____

21. INSECT REACTION: (Enter 0 = Not Tested; 1 = Susceptible; 2 = Resistant)

☐ 0 Mexican Bean Beetle (*Epilachna varivestis*)

☐ 0 Potato Leaf Hopper (*Empoasca fabae*)

☐ Other (Specify) _____

22. INDICATE WHICH VARIETY MOST CLOSELY RESEMBLES THAT SUBMITTED.

CHARACTER	NAME OF VARIETY	CHARACTER	NAME OF VARIETY
Plant Shape	S14-G3	Seed Coat Luster	
Leaf Shape	S14-U4	Seed Size	S14-U4
Leaf Color		Seed Shape	
Leaf Size	S14-U4	Seedling Pigmentation	S14-U4

23. GIVE DATA FOR SUBMITTED AND SIMILAR STANDARD VARIETY: Paired Comparison Data

20010020

VARIETY	NO. OF DAYS MATURITY	PLANT LODGING SCORE	CM PLANT HEIGHT	LEAFLET SIZE		SEED CONTENT		SEED SIZE G/100 SEEDS	NO. SEEDS/POD
				CM Width	CM Length	% Protein	% Oil		
Submitted	125	2.3	61	6	10	39.6	21.5	19	
S14-U 4 Name of Similar Variety	123	2.5	71	6	10	38.1	21.6	19	

PUBLICATIONS USEFUL AS REFERENCE AIDS FOR COMPLETING THIS FORM:

1. Caldwell, B.E., ed. 1973. Soybeans: Improvement, Production, and Uses. Amer. Soc. Agron. Monograph No. 16.
2. Buttery, B.R. and R.I. Buzzell. 1968. Peroxidase activity in seeds of soybean varieties. Crop Sci., 8: 722-725.
3. Hymowitz, T. 1973. Electrophoretic analysis of SBTI-A₂ in the USDA soybean germplasm collection. Crop Sci., 13: 420-421.
4. Payne, R.C. and L.F. Morris. 1976. Differentiation of soybean cultivars by seedling pigmentation patterns. J. Seed Technol. 1: 1-19.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
AGRICULTURAL MARKETING SERVICE

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EXHIBIT E
STATEMENT OF THE BASIS OF OWNERSHIP

1. NAME OF APPLICANT(S) Syngenta Seeds, Inc.		2. TEMPORARY DESIGNATION OR EXPERIMENTAL NUMBER M001219, X016	3. VARIETY NAME S16-Y6
4. ADDRESS (Street and No., or R.F.D. No., City, State, and ZIP Code, and Country) P.O. Box 959 Minneapolis, MN 55440		5. TELEPHONE (include area code) 763-593-7333	6. FAX (include area code) 763-593-7801
		7. PVPO NUMBER 200100204	
8. Does the applicant own all rights to the variety? Mark an "X" in appropriate block. If no, please explain. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO			
9. Is the applicant (individual or company) a U.S. national or U.S. based company? If no, give name of country <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO			
10. Is the applicant the original owner? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO If no, please answer the following: a. If original rights to variety were owned by individual(s), is (are) the original owner(s) a U.S. national(s)? <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO If no, give name of country _____ b. If original rights to variety were owned by a company, is the original owner(s) a U.S. based company? <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO If no, give name of country _____			
11. Additional explanation on ownership (If needed, use reverse for extra space):			

PLEASE NOTE:

Plant variety protection can be afforded only to owners (not licensees) who meet one of the following criteria:

1. If the rights to the variety are owned by the original breeder, that person must be a U.S. national, national of a UPOV member country, or national of a country which affords similar protection to nationals of the U.S. for the same genus and species.
2. If the rights to the variety are owned by the company which employed the original breeder(s), the company must be U.S. based, owned by nationals of a UPOV member country, or owned by nationals of a country which affords similar protection to nationals of the U.S. for the same genus and species.
3. If the applicant is an owner who is not the original owner, both the original owner and the applicant must meet one of the above criteria.

The original breeder/owner may be the individual or company who directed final breeding. See Section 41(a)(2) of the Plant Variety Protection Act for definition.

According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, no persons are required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB control number. The valid OMB control number for this information collection is 0581-0055. The time required to complete this information collection is estimated to average 10 minutes per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in its programs on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, and marital or familial status. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact the USDA Office of Communications at (202) 720-5881 (voice) or (202) 720-7808 (TDD). To file a complaint, write the Secretary of Agriculture, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 20250, or call 1-800-245-6340 (voice) or (202) 720-1127 (TDD). USDA is an equal employment opportunity employer.